

Bent's Old Fort

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Bent's Old Fort
National Historic Site
La Junta, Colorado



Santa Fe Trail Encampment

June 4, 2016 8:00 am – 5:30 pm

Location: Bent's Old Fort

The sights, sounds and smells of the 1830s and 1840s Santa Fe Trail and Bent's Fort comes to life during the largest event of the year, the Santa Fe Trail Encampment! More than 40 living historians perform the work of hunters, traders, teamsters, Indians, laborers, craftsmen, and soldiers in the fort and at their camps in the cottonwoods on the river. While traders conduct trade with the Indians, the hunters will be busy skinning and packing hides for shipment by horseback. The sound of a handsaw will be heard coming from the carpenter shop as carpenters build a bellows. Meat and beans will be the main "bill of fare" for company employees unless the women decide to bake a vinegar pie or make trappers' fruit. The fort doctor may be able to help you with your ailments. Just remember the main forms of treatment are bleeding, purging and puking!



You will encounter "opposition traders" on your walk from the parking lot the fort and river. They will be "hawking their trade goods" at their lean-to tent. Have a look inside Susan Magoffin's tent, furnished with her fold down writing table and a regular bed! Further along the trail to the river you will come to a small Indian camp. The tribe is here trading at the fort and will welcome you in. Just inside the cottonwoods you will see a various kinds of tents grouped together in military fashion. This is the Topographical Engineer camp just as it was in 1846. The trapper camp is the furthest camp away set on the river. You may smell buffalo tongue on the fire and hides being prepared for drying. Everyone there is ready to help you step back in time.

Hike with the Caravan Down the Santa Fe Trail

June 5, 2016 10am – 1:00 pm

Location: 15 miles Southwest of La Junta, Colorado



On Sunday, June 5, the public can hike 3 miles of the Santa Fe Trail behind the fort's Conestoga, Dearborn, and farm wagons. The teamsters will use verbal commands of "haw" and "gee" to steer the oxen. Much of the prairie remains as it was which can provide for some great photo opportunities. The caravan will depart from Sierra Vista Overlook, 14 miles south of La Junta, Colorado, just off of U.S. Highway 350 on State Highway 71. The caravan will leave at 10 am and should reach Timpas Picnic Area before 1 pm.

The National Park Service in cooperation with US Forest Service - Comanche National Grassland will provide shuttle service from Sierra Vista to Timpas before the walk and from Timpas to Sierra Vista after the walk. Plan to wear sturdy boots or shoes, a hat, and bring sunscreen, water, and your lunch. The wagons will not be used to transport visitors and so be prepared to walk the 3 miles. The Junior Ranger program will be available for kids to earn a Junior Ranger badge in recognition of their accomplishment. This is a great opportunity to get a taste of what it was like to traverse the plains in the 1840s. Call 719-383-5023 for further information.

